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THE

# WAY TO ZION.

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# THE WAY TO ZION.

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What shall I do to be saved? Let us with child-like simplicity follow the teachings of Holy Writ: unaided reason will only lead us into error, and cause our feet to stumble upon the dark mountains, and our souls to perish in the shadow of death. There *is* a straight, direct, and narrow way, that leads to peace and rest, but unsanctified nature refuses to walk in it. Now, as of old, the multitudes prefer, like stiff-necked Israel, to wander through many a burning desert, and to pitch their tents, for weary days, at the very foot of *Sinai*.

Why did not the Hebrews march right up from Egypt and take possession of the promised land? The answer is, they did not hearken unto the voice of the Lord! Had they believed the testimony of Jehovah, their pilgrimage would have been short and easy. And why do men in this generation linger and travail so long in pain before they come to Christ? Surely we are not straitened in God; the cross is right before us, we need not toil an hour. The time is *now*, the place is here. *Hear* what the Scriptures teach. "Say not in thy heart, who shall ascend into Heaven (that is to bring Christ down from above), or who shall descend

into the deep (that is to bring up Christ again from the dead.) But what saith it? The word is nigh thee, even in thy mouth and in thy heart, that is, the word of faith which we preach: That if thou shall confess with thy mouth the Lord Jesus, and shall believe in thine heart that God hath raised Him from the dead, thou shalt be saved!"

That salvation is offered *now*, can be abundantly proved by scriptural examples. Let us open the book and read. "Then Peter said unto them, repent, and be baptized, every one of you, in the name of Jesus Christ, for the remission of sins, and ye shall receive the Holy Ghost. For the promise is unto you and to your children, and to all that are afar off, even as many as the Lord our God shall call. And with many other words did he exhort, saying, save yourselves from this untoward generation. Then they that gladly received his word were baptized, and the *same day* were added unto them, about three thousand souls." (Acts ii: 38 to 41.) The interview which Peter had with the Centurion, teaches, that *now* is the accepted time, and that to day is *the day of salvation.*

Take another case—"On the Sabbath, Paul and Silas went out of the city by a river side, where prayer was wont to be made: and they sat down and spake unto the women which resorted thither. And a certain woman named Lydia, a seller of purple, of the city of Thyatira, which worshipped God, heard them, whose heart God opened, that she attended unto the things which were spoken of Paul." (Acts xvi: 13, 14.)

But a still more striking example is that of the Philippian jailor: "And at midnight Paul and Silas prayed

and sang praises unto God: and the prisoners heard them; and suddenly there was a great earthquake, so that the foundations of the prison were shaken, and immediately all the doors were opened, and every one's bands were loosed. And the keeper of the prison awaking out of his sleep and seeing the prison doors open, he drew out his sword and would have killed himself, supposing the prisoners had been fled. But Paul cried with a loud voice, saying, do thyself no harm: for we are all here. Then he called for a light, and sprang in and came trembling and fell down before Paul and Silas, and brought them out and said, Sirs, what must I do to be saved: and they said, believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved, and thy house. And they spake unto him the words of the Lord, and to all that were in his house: and he took them the same hour of the night, and washed their stripes; and was baptized, he and all his, straightway." (Acts xvi: 25 to 33.)

We will add, on this point, only one more illustration. Philip falls in, by divine opportunity, with a man of Ethiopia, an Eunuch of great authority, under Candace, Queen of the Ethiopians. Philip goes near and joins himself to the chariot as the Eunuch was reading Esaias, the Prophet. He asks the question: "Understandest thou what thou readest?" The answer is, "How can I, except some man should guide me?" And he desired Philip that he would come up and sit with him. The place of the Scripture which he read was this: "He was led as a sheep to the slaughter, and like a lamb, dumb before his shearer, so opened he not his mouth: in his humiliation, his judgment was taken

away; and who shall declare his generation. For his life is taken from the earth." And the Eunuch answered Philip and said, "I pray thee, of whom speaketh the Prophet this. Of himself or some other man?" Then Philip opened his mouth and began at the same Scripture, and preached unto him Jesus. *And as they went on their way* they came unto a certain water; and the Eunuch said, "See, here is water, what doth hinder me to be baptised?" And Philip said, "If thou believest with all thine heart, thou mayest;" and he answered and said, "I believe that Jesus Christ is the Son of God." (Acts viii: 26, 38. These instances, taken from Scripture, show conclusively, that salvation is offered *to-day*.

The reason why multitudes are in heaviness through months and years, may be briefly stated as follows:

1st. The great difficulty in the sinner's way is, confidence in *himself*. He attempts to reform, seeks the company of moral persons, reads the Bible regularly, attends upon the sanctuary, even has stated seasons for prayer, *and upon such rigteousness as this depends for salvation*.

2d. But when he finds that God will not make peace with him upon terms like these, the awakened soul goes about to renounce all worth and merit, and then trusts in *this renunciation* as the ground of pardon and justification, not perceiving that Pharisaism has only shifted its position.

3d. The enquirer often looks to *convictions* for deliverance. Ah! says one, if I could only *feel* more deeply, my salvation then were sure. Here, however, is only another form of self-righteousness. The soul looks to

feeling within, rather than to a Saviour without.

4th. The sinner sometimes affects to be very humble, goes to God with a confession of his unworthiness, tells the Judge how just it would be, to send such a guilty rebel as himself, to hell; that he has no claims for mercy in consequence of all his cries and tears, and duties. And yet, (with glaring contradiction) the inquirer expects, *for all this*, to be instantly saved. Once more has he come to God with a price in his hand.

To trust our own works is madness; and yet the sinner looks to and rests in these, *excluding Christ by them*, and thereby perishes. What, however, is prayer but a confession of need? What is true conviction but a sense of unworthiness? And what is Bible searching but an acknowledgment of ignorance? A rotten foundation, indeed, for the hope of eternal life. Truly we must cease from man whose breath is in his nostrils, and all of whose righteousness is as filthy rags.

5th. The enquirer, many times, becomes irritated or sullen, while he utters secret or open complaints against the strictness of Divine law. Its requirements are too broad, and it is humiliating to confess one's *extreme nakedness*. He wishes to offer *something* which will conceal this deep poverty. But thwarted at every point, and gloomy, the soul is filled with murmurs, especially against the *sovereignty* of God. Just here there is often a terrible conflict, for the great deep of the soul breaks up.

But the more a sinner looks at *himself*, the less comfort and peace does he find, since out of the *heart* proceed evil thoughts, murders, adulteries, fornication, thefts, false witness, blasphemies, and whatsoever *defiles*.

It is made manifest, therefore, that by the deeds of the law, no flesh shall be justified in God's sight. For by the law is the knowledge of sin. Prayers, tears, convictions, murmurings, are signs, not of health, but of disease.

It is now that all seems to be lost, and the soul, silent and heavy laden, treads those verges of despair, where the dregs of its own bitter and sinful cup are wrung out.

But man's extremity is God's opportunity. And whenever we are fully convinced of our own inability, and willing to be saved upon God's offered terms, and just when and where God chooses, then does the day of our salvation draw near. Said the Saviour, "Come unto Me all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest." "Look unto Me all ye ends of the earth and be ye saved, for I am God, and there is none else beside." "He that *believeth* on the Son, hath eternal life."

What then is the nature of that act of the mind, whereby a soul betakes itself to Christ and is saved? We hear of trusting, hoping, waiting, receiving, looking and believing. It will be noted, that all these expressions indicate weakness, poverty, dependence. "Faith," says an apostle, "is the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen." It is not repose in God, simply as Creator, Lawgiver and Preserver, but it is the act of a distressed and burdened spirit, when it withdraws all confidence from a frail and imperfect creature and casts itself without reserve upon the divine and compassionate Redeemer, God manifest in the flesh. That faith which is saving, has Christ

alone as the object. It looks to Him, whose blood was shed for our blood and whose everlasting righteousness constitutes the *sole ground* of every pious hope. Grace moves upon the head and heart, and faith is the product. It is not simply the *intellectual* belief of testimony, but the humble, cordial, gracious assent of *mind and heart* to the reception of the Messiah in all His offices of Prophet, Priest and King. It is the intelligent and affectionate application to ourselves, individually, of all those proffered offers of mercy, which are found revealed in the Gospel.

One, however, may experience many mental exercises, and yet, come short of salvation. To be deeply conscious of peril does not give safety to either body or soul. The belated traveller in a storm is fearful—the mariner driven to a rock is wide awake to danger; but fear and alarm in these cases do not bring immunity. To be advised of a refuge from danger is not sufficient. He who knows a balm for disease and fails to apply it, suffers just as inevitably as the ignorant. One must not only be informed of danger, be apprised of the remedy, but must know *and apply*. As the belated traveller, or storm-tossed mariner sees his danger, even quails at it, and perishes too, so the soul of man can be convicted of sin; trembling under its penalties, be directed to a Saviour; and, after all, become a castaway. True, he must perceive his danger, feel his helplessness, and be pointed to a remedy; all this is necessary, but not enough. He must actually find a refuge from the storm; he must actually lay hold of the hope set before him; he must, without fail, go beneath the shelter. And this every soul must do, not by proxy, but personally. The

greater his guilt and danger, the more urgent the necessity for an immediate application to Christ. And in the moment that he turns away from self, loses all confidence in the flesh, and looks to Jesus only, this is the moment of life.

*The precise thing, therefore, for the sinner to do, is to find out his own helplessness, his total insufficiency, and let go every refuge, but Christ.*

But the *emotions* of persons, spiritually or physically rescued, will vary according to temperament. If two individuals are overtaken by storm, either on land or sea, and extricated, the difference, in this respect, will be very marked. One will be joyful and talkative, entering minutely into the terrors that are escaped, while the other is so confused and stunned, as to lie almost insensible. But this timid, nervous person, *is* as fully rescued as his neighbour.

Faith and *assurance* are not identical. One individual speedily forgets the terrors of the law, as he finds shelter beneath the Gospel. Another person lies yet trembling and afraid, even in the very ark of safety. His language is, I cannot surely be saved, this is a delusion, I am dreaming, the storm will come again ; I shall wake up presently and find myself not only mistaken, but hopelessly lost. And yet, even in this agitated bosom, there is a feeble hope that deliverance has come. *A common feeling with such persons, is this, that while they have not full comfort in looking to Christ, they find no satisfaction at all in looking to any other source.* And thus, it is true, that one may have faith, and yet, not possess the *assurance* of faith. The one (that is faith) is essential, (for without it, it is impossible to please

God,) the other, (that is the assurance of faith) is a comfortable gift, for which every good man should labour and pray. But, after all, not a few Christians seem to come short of it. This may arise from natural temperament or bodily infirmity. For there are "bruised reeds" that need the gentle hand of both physician and minister. With such persons, too much caution and tenderness cannot be exercised, lest we quench the smoking flax, and violently offend one of those little ones, for whom Christ died.

But, if we have faith, at all, even though it be as a grain of mustard seed; if we can say, "Lord, I believe, help though mine unbelief," then our foundation stands strong. The evidences of regeneration, therefore, are

1. A distinct consciousness of unworthiness. But it is not necessary that this conviction of sin should be accompanied with very great terror or alarm. All the feeling that God requires, is to realize our need of Christ.

2. There must be an actual renunciation of self-confidence, a determined purpose to forsake sin, and the exercise of holy, Scriptural trust in the Redeemer. This faith may be very small at first. It is not the quantity, however, but the *quality* that saves.

3. A disposition to be employed. By this shall all men know that "ye are My disciples, if ye *do* whatsoever, I command you." Activity is the law. The true Christian does not stand idle; but goes into the vineyard to work. Hence, while the beginning may be feeble, the true child of God *must grow*. For undefiled religion bestirs the soul, and the path of the "just is as the shining light, that shineth more and more unto the perfect day."

4. Another certain sign of regeneration, is love for the Word, house, ordinances and people of God. Said the Psalmist: "Oh! how love I Thy law; it is my meditation all the day—a day in Thy courts is better than a thousand; I had rather be a door-keeper in the house of my God, than to dwell in the tents of wickedness." Said an apostle: "We know that we have passed from death unto life, because we love the brethren."

5. Humility is the crowning grace. No true child of God takes credit to himself. Others may praise him; but he bemoans his own unprofitableness. Said the Patriarch Jacob, "Few and evil have the days of the years of my life been." Job answered the Lord, and said, "Behold, I am vile." "It is a faithful saying," says Paul, "and worthy of all acceptation, that Jesus Christ came into the world to save sinners, of whom I am chief. I am less than the least of all saints. If I labour, it is not I, but *the grace of God* that is with me."

"Just as I am, without one plea,
But that Thy blood was spilt for me,
And that Thou biddest me come to Thee,
Oh! Lamb of God, I come."

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